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STATE PASS FOR USAID/AFR/WA, AFR/SD, AND EGAT MOTT  
STATE PASS TO USTR-AGAMA  
DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS AND 3130/USFC/OIO/ANESA/DHARRIS  
TREASURY FOR PETERS AND HALL  
COMUSNAVEUR FOR ANAGGIAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: YAR'ADUA VISITS THE NIGER DELTA

Classified By: Consul General Donna Blair, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) Summary: On July 20, President Yar'Adua paid a one-day visit to Bayelsa state, his first visit to the Niger Delta since taking office in 2007. In a speech at the state capital, Yar'Adua proclaimed that the "days of militancy are over and gone for good," and predicted fancifully that Nigeria would produce 6000 MW of electricity by the end of the year. Niger Delta contacts dismissed Yar'Adua's trip as "pure politics" designed to bolster the local PDP governor's standing and to secure his support for Yar'Adua in the 2011 presidential election. End Summary.

12. (C) Speaking before a crowd of State government officials and other invited "stakeholders" in the Bayelsa state capital of Yenagoa, President Yar'Adua proclaimed that the "days of militancy in the Niger Delta region are over and gone for good." Perhaps aware of his strained credibility in the region, Yar'Adua stressed the sincerity of his amnesty offer, and expressed the hope that "soon" the Niger Delta would be the development hub of West Africa. Yar'Adua then affirmed that everything was "on track" for the country to generate 6000 MW of electricity by the end of the year.

13. (C) As Chris Ekiyor, President of the Ijaw Youth Council, told Poloff the following day: "It is hard to know if Yar'Adua is being fooled by his advisors or if he is fooling himself, but he is not fooling anyone else." Ekiyor refused to attend the speech in protest against the continued displacement of tens of thousands of Ijaws from the Gbaramatu Kingdom, saying he would not go and "pay homage" to a President who had utterly failed his people. He claimed that the projects Yar'Adua was allegedly in Bayelsa to inaugurate were "absolutely non-existent."

14. (C) Ahonsi Unuigbe, Commissioner for Budget, Planning and Economic Growth in Edo state, told PolOff that he was unsure if Yar'Adua was "monumentally stupid" or if he just thought everyone else was, noting that Yar'Adua came from a "feudal" tradition where leaders could get away with telling their vassals any lie, no matter how outlandish. He dismissed Yar'Adua's trip as "pure politics," a bid to demonstrate his support for Governor Timipre Sylva against a local rival and to ensure that Sylva "delivers" Bayelsa to

Yar'Adua in the next presidential election.

5.(C) The traditional ruler of the Yenakan Kingdom in Bayelsa, Chief Ovie Omeleh, suggested that Yar'Adua came to Bayelsa to disprove rumors that he was "losing control" and "afraid" to come to the Niger Delta. Omeleh claimed that people pointed to Yar'Adua's failure to visit the Niger Delta, including his cancellation on short notice of a previously planned visit, as evidence that Yar'Adua had no confidence in his own amnesty program and feared the "militants."

¶6. (C) Comment: Yar'Adua's failure to generate much positive local reaction from his belated visit to the Niger Delta is not surprising, particularly after he undercut his political credibility by tacking on a transparently fanciful promise about national power generation. Bolstering his party's local prospects in the next election was no doubt a major motivation for Yar'Adua's quick foray into the Delta.  
End Summary.

¶7. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.

BLAIR